

INTRODUCTION

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information about particular villages to determine their suitability. Finally, we chose Hsin Hsing village, in Pu Yen Hsiang, Chang-hua Hsien, since of the villages being given final consideration, it was the only one in which housing was available.

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At the outset it was difficult to determine the typicality of the village chosen, but Hsin Hsing does not appear to differ significantly from other villages in the area. Like any other village it has its own characteristics, but as far as I could determine, aside from a somewhat smaller average landholding per family compared to other villages of the district, few cultural or social differences of major consequence existed.

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For more than sixteen months, during 1957-1958, my wife and I lived in Hsin Hsing, conducting both formal and informal interviews. As residents of the village living in one wing of the home of a former village landlord, we were invited to almost all village functions. By living in the village, we became semiparticipant observers and could observe the daily interaction among people, recognize and identify individuals, and better understand relationships between families and between their members. We actually established reciprocal visiting relationships, much like those the villagers had amongst themselves, with a great many people of Hsin Hsing and some from neighboring villages.

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When we moved into the village we were formally introduced to the entire population at a regular village meeting. At that time the village elected leaders, and I told the villagers that I was interested in the customs of the Taiwanese village people. Soon after getting settled, we began the actual study by mapping the village and surveying all the village households to determine the composition of the families. During this survey, we became acquainted with a large number of villagers with whom we talked about village life and some of its problems, gaining some initial insights into the village's economic situation and the similarities and differences among village families.

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Although a number of especially articulate villagers were developed as key informants over a period of time, in actuality almost the entire population served as informants. During the early part of the study in Hsin Hsing, interviews were carried on through conversations; most of the data were recorded out of sight of the informants after the interviews were completed. When the informants were fully at ease with us during the later phase of the research period, interviews were recorded on the spot. In order to obtain quantifying data to supplement the unstructured interviews, a limited number of additional surveys and questionnaires were also conducted during this time.

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From the very beginning of our stay in Hsin Hsing, the villagers showed great interest in our presence. In a sense, many of them seemed

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123 to be quite pleased that we had decided to live in their village. A number of them actually pointed out that life was now much more interesting and exciting for them. For one thing, our presence in Hsin Hsing (we were the only Westerners ever to have lived anywhere in that area) resulted in an increased number of visits from outside relatives and friends. Many of these people came to visit in the village with the idea of at least getting a view of the foreigners. Not long after our arrival we learned that some Hsin Hsing villagers, upon meeting or visiting relatives or friends from other villages, would actually extend an invitation to them to "come visit and I'll take you in to have tea with the Americans." While some villagers or their guests would be too embarrassed to actually come into our house, they were not too embarrassed to stand at the windows or doors and peer in at us for a length of time. When this occurred, we would frequently issue a personal invitation to come in and sit awhile. This kind of entertaining proved to be quite fruitful in that early in our stay we got a very good idea of the extent, the nature, and the kind of relationships that Hsin Hsing villagers have beyond their own village. It also gave me some opportunities for entree into the other villages from which these people came and therefore served as an important means for gathering information and pictures of the area villages. On the basis of such contacts and others we were then frequently invited to visit neighboring villages and even some not so near.

During the early part of our stay in Hsin Hsing, the villagers generally tried to keep us from witnessing or even hearing about the various and frequent magical rituals which most often took place late in the night. Gradually, as we began to make several friends in the village who took an interest in us and our work, we were quietly informed of the performance of these rituals. Once we had managed to be present at one or two of these rituals, our presence became an accepted matter-of-fact occurrence. After a brief time I was even able to take photographs of the various magical activities which are described in some detail in later chapters.

• [126] Within a month after we had taken up residence in the village, apparently as a matter of courtesy we were invited to a wedding festival in Hsin Hsing. Our presence seemed to make a big hit with the villagers and especially with their guests, who soon happily engaged me in various kinds of drinking games. With this initial contact experience over, there was scarcely a single festival or a happy occasion or even a funeral ceremonial to which we were not invited. It was not at all unusual for me to be asked to make a brief public talk to congratulate the newlyweds or to take part in a funeral by wearing a mourning band for the deceased. When village festivals were being planned and money collected from each village family to finance the occasion, after

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115 just as my wife and I came to
123 be genuinely fond of many of the villagers as people, so did the interpreter.
123 His warm attitude toward the villagers was extremely important. The vil-
124 lagers' impression of the interpreter—at least at the beginning—is likely
to be transferred to the researcher. What the researcher says to the informant
or hears from the informant must pass through the interpreter, who merely by
tone of voice and facial expressions can either hinder or help in creating
a warm and friendly relationship. Under such circumstances the researcher
has little control over the situation. Although a single poor translation
may produce some inaccurate data, a slight conflict in personality between
interpreter and informant may cause the alienation of one and perhaps more
of the informants.

124 On those occasions when the interpreter translated from Mandarin to
English, I had the opportunity to check on the accuracy of his translations.
Especially at the beginning of the fieldwork, I specifically requested that the
interpreter translate from Mandarin. Since I knew Mandarin, I could make
any necessary corrections in the translation or could at least discuss his trans-
lation technique. It was hoped that any necessary improvements would then
be carried into the translation of Japanese to Mandarin or English.

Throughout the research period the interpreter lived in the village as a
member of our household. Through frequent discussions, he became quite
familiar with the nature of the research and usually knew the objectives of
each interview. Although the interviews were directed, they were of a free
conversational type which permitted following up promising leads as they
developed in the course of a conversation.

On frequent occasions it became necessary and feasible for the interpreter
to carry on lengthy, uninterrupted discussions with an informant on some
question raised during the course of the interview. Since the interpreter had
proven himself to be accurate and reliable, such a situation was not detrimen-
tal. But regardless of how good the interpreter is, something must be lost to
the researcher, who in this case, more than ever the third party, must wait
patiently to hear what has taken place between the interpreter and the in-
formant. The interpreter's familiarity with the nature of the research can be
of great help in such an interview situation.

But a serious problem may be created by the situation which has just been
described. The interpreter may not be aware of points raised by his discussion
with the informant which may need further investigation. The researcher
may lose the opportunity to delve more deeply into leads which might be
pertinent for his study. Under such a system something must be lost, but
this is only one of the many problems inherent in an interview technique
which relies on the use of an interpreter (Phillips 1959-1960).

At the same time, there are many positive things to be said for the use of
an interpreter. The interview situation, to say the least, is not an easy one.
For the researcher it is often quite wearisome not only to ask the questions
and listen to answers but to keep the conversation flowing, always watching
for information or a lead on a totally different subject. Such an interview
does not usually go according to any schedule. In addition to all this, the
researcher must record all the pertinent data, either in writing or, in my case,
by committing it to memory for later recording. A well-trained interpreter

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may relieve the interviewer of some of these burdens and so, in many ways, actually improve the quality of the interview and the data obtained. A good interpreter may enable the interviewer to mull things over and to concentrate on the possible implications of the data obtained while the interpreter discusses things with the informant. 124

Another initial problem was my original lack of familiarity with details of local etiquette. It is entirely too easy for an unsuspecting anthropologist to commit a *faux pas* which could permanently affect his relations with people. An interpreter who is native to the area and hence aware of local customs can be of great value here. He may be better equipped to interpret signs or hints of the end of an interview, or of what to do in certain situations. 123
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I found that once the interpreter was familiar enough with the nature of the research and the interview technique, it was possible to have him carry on certain types of routine interviews while I was busy recording earlier joint interviews. The interpreter was able in this way to help collect kinship data as well as detailed descriptions of the agricultural cycle and techniques. 124
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As already noted, during the greater part of the village study, I usually recorded interviews well after the interview was concluded. Therefore, to provide a possible check on my understanding of the translation and also on my memory, the interpreter read over the interview for possible inaccuracies before it was considered acceptable. Entire interviews were then recorded on unisort cards and carbon duplicates. The use of the unisort card system later facilitated the cross-categorizing of the field data.

Whenever possible, I conducted interviews in Mandarin by myself. This, of course, could only be done with Mandarin speakers such as local policemen, teachers, younger village people, and other villagers who had picked up Mandarin while working in the capital city of Taipei. Speaking Mandarin, especially with local officials, greatly aided me in establishing better rapport and in obtaining access to important official documents and statistics. Occasionally, when the interpreter was not available for translation of Taiwanese, a Mandarin-speaking villager—such as a young boy—could be used for this purpose. 124
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My wife, who had an adequate command of Mandarin and knew the Taiwanese language somewhat better than I, helped with the research. She interviewed women and girls of the village, often using young people as translators from the Taiwanese to Mandarin. Since she was allowed to go where a man was not admitted, such as the room of a prospective bride about to leave her parents' home, she could advantageously observe events closed to all men. 114
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* [12] While we cannot agree with their curious assumption that the term "psychological" labels a form of behavior rather than an interpretation of behavior, it is nonetheless interesting to see how far one can go towards an interpretation of decisions about marriage and adoption without reference to psychology. Are the concepts developed in structural studies entirely adequate to account for such decisions, or must one also refer to the needs of the individual as an organism and the dispositions formed by the experiences of a lifetime?

Our strategy in attempting to answer these and other questions which we will raise along the way will be to compare the decisions made by families of varying types. Do those families who choose to adopt a girl and raise her as a wife for their son differ in any way from those who decide to marry their son in the preferred way? Are there any consistent differences between those families who marry their daughters matrilocally and those who do not? Do those girls who are raised by their natal families possess any characteristics which distinguish them from girls given in adoption? Unfortunately, we do not always know as much about these decisions as we would like to know. Many of them were made as long as seventy years ago, and the persons responsible were either dead or unavailable at the time of our study.

[123] Although it would be ideal to have detailed information about the situation of the family at the time each decision was made, we will
-[126] ordinarily have to depend upon after the fact statements and such information as is contained in genealogies collected in 1960.

chapter 2



THE VILLAGE



361 Passing out of the narrow lane into the open countryside is like pass-
13 ing through the gates of a walled city. The backs of the tall, window-
less brick houses form a solid barrier between the noise of the town
and the stillness of the country. The shouts of street hawkers and the
loud inquiries of customers are softened to a murmur. The senses are
now more impressed by what is seen than by what is heard. In the
distance the mountains limit the eyes' sweep. Even the thick anarchy
of ferns and trees and vines does not relieve their harsh, jagged lines.
But, on a hot day, as the humidity builds up, the mountains recede,
become vague and indistinct, the misty impressions of an old Chinese
scroll. An uneven line of shrubs and trees, darker in color, more
precise in outline, seems to be at the base of the mountains but
actually is several miles closer, hugging the damp banks of the Tamsui
River, sheltering the village of Peihotien. This area on which Tapu
turns its back is known as Hotien.

* 596 Although there are now many surnames represented in Hotien, the
601 district was originally settled by the Lim family. The Chinese record
173 the births, marriages, and deaths of their male progeny in genealogies,
613 thus providing a skeletal history of their lineage. To them, the impor-
175 tant part of the document is the long family tree which traces their
line of descent back through many centuries, but in most genealogies
there is also a short essay describing the family's place of origin, the
location of the clan temple that houses the memorial tablets of more
distant ancestors, and perhaps even some sketches of the temple itself.

124 It is from a document of this kind and from rambling conversations
173 with the elderly men and women of Peihotien that I obtained the

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The Village

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mythical-historical background of the Lim family with whom we lived.

As with nearly all of the ancestors of the Hokkien-speaking residents of Taiwan, the Lims' ancestors were born in the province of Fukien. Around 1770, two Lim brothers left their village in the Tungan district of Chuanchou and migrated to Taiwan, lured by the prospect of free virgin land. After looking around a bit, they settled along the Tamsui River and began to till the soil. Evidently they prospered, for their descendants were numerous. Every few years a member of the group went back to Chuanchou to pay their respects to the ancestors in the lineage temple in Fukien and to record in the family genealogy the recent deaths and births in Taiwan. The trip was not an easy one and after several generations the Taiwan branch of the family began to feel less closely allied to the family in their old home. At last a representative was sent to make a copy of the old genealogy in Chuanchou and bring it to Taiwan. From then on, only the names of the descendants of the two Lim brothers who migrated to Taiwan were entered in the genealogy. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the Lims of Hotien were a strong and united group. Some of the family units were more successful than others, but even the landless families who worked as tenants under their more fortunate kinsmen shared in the profits from the portion of land owned jointly by all Lims. The proceeds from this corporate land were used to finance various activities, not the least of which was a huge feast at the annual meeting.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the lineage organization of the Lims began to disintegrate, splintering along the lines of the main family branches. Often the dissolution of large lineages such as the Lims follows disagreements over the management of the joint land holdings or suspicion of malfeasance in the disposition of their profits. Whatever the cause in the Lim family, the elders of the dissident branches once again copied the original genealogy and from that time forward entered only the names of the descendants of their own branch.

Just when and in what order these events took place in the district of Hotien is subject to question. The elderly, the men and women in their 70's, are the people who have both the time and the interest to speculate about the past. They share with all men the desire to tell the way it ought to have been rather than the way it was, to

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